

Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Meeting Notes for Meeting #5

September 19, 2013

Committee Members Present: Co-chairs Barbara Wright and Charlie Zaragoza, Steve Daschle, Bill Farmer, Thomas Goldstein, Jessie Israel, Diana Kincaid, Michael Maddux, Brice Maryman, Yalonda Gill Masundire (via conference call), Mustapha Math, Erika Melroy

Committee Members Not in Attendance: Thatcher Bailey, Juli Farris, David Namura

Welcoming Remarks

- Barbara Wright welcomed the Committee members and members of the public to the fifth meeting of the Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee
- Two subcommittees have formed and will start meeting later this fall:
 - Race and Social Justice Committee with Juli Farris and Steve Daschle
 - Naming Committee with Brice Maryman and Thatcher Bailey
- The City Council's Parks and Neighborhoods Committee was briefed on the work of the Legacy Committee today
- The Investment Initiatives are a work in progress – they will continue to evolve
- The Committee's October meetings (on the 3rd and 17th) will be devoted to funding mechanisms
- The Committee will be completing a preliminary recommendation by mid-December, there will be public meetings on the recommendation in January and February, with a final report to the mayor and City Council by mid-March

Public Comments

- **Bob Davidson:** Mr. Davidson is the President and CEO of the Seattle Aquarium Society. The Aquarium is the primary resource for marine conservation and education, and has served over one million students since opening in 1977. The Aquarium is owned by the City and operated by the Aquarium Society; the Aquarium gets no operating subsidy from the City. However, by agreement, major maintenance is the City's responsibility. The harsh marine environment is hard on the facility; plus the aquarium animals need a secure, safe home. The Aquarium has a \$14 million major maintenance backlog, including items such as sea water pumps that pump hundreds of millions of gallons of salt water each year. The Aquarium is asking for \$1.2 million annually for major maintenance through the new funding measure.
- **Catherine Verrenti:** Ms. Verrenti is from Neighborhood House. Neighborhood House's Be Active Together (BAT) program has provided information about the needs of the low income community. The women-only swims are an example of designing programs that meet the needs of the community. Location matters when it comes to health. Full use of Parks facilities in low income neighborhoods could be life changing.
- **Gordon Padelford:** Mr. Padelford is with Seattle Neighborhood Greenways. He is supportive of Investment Initiative #30: Greenways and Safe Walkways with SDOT and Others. The

background info provided with the Initiative is good. An example of a greenway project is at Spokane & Lafayette where there is a traffic diverter and crosswalk to get people safely to Jefferson Park. Families want to get safely to parks and they don't care what agency helps make this happen. This is a great opportunity for collaboration, with Parks providing kiosks, benches and activation. What will result is a means to get people healthy and active to and through parks.

- **Bruce Bentley:** Mr. Bentley is a member of the Woodland Park Zoo Board. The Zoo has major maintenance priorities, but no funding. The maintenance projects are not well-suited for private fundraising. The need at the Zoo is for \$2 million annually to tackle the seismic upgrades, roof replacements and repair, electrical and plumbing needs. In addition, the Tropical Rainforest and Day-Night buildings require \$7.35 million in improvements.
- **Larry Simmons:** Mr. Simmons is the maintenance supervisor at the Zoo. A 1985 bond issue built much of the facilities at the Zoo and they are now getting to the end of their life cycle.
- **Sharon LaVine:** Park enthusiasts like Parks current structure, as citizens have access to the Superintendent and staff. A Metropolitan Park District will disenfranchise citizens. If the Committee recommends a levy, it will be OK'd by voters. Including an Upper Queen Anne dog park will bring support, as would a new dog park in the South Lake Union neighborhood. There are no Investment Initiatives for off-leash supporters; please include enhancements for the existing 14 off-leash areas and new ones in the new levy.
- **Nora Chan:** Ms. Chan is active with the Seattle Chinese Garden. The Garden provides many benefits for children and the elderly. There are thousands of visitors each year and lots of cultural and educational events, including kite-flying, calligraphy and gardening. The Garden fosters a love for the outdoors and bridges the gap between the eastern and western worlds. The Garden is a legacy for future generations, but to continue to be so it needs to expand in order to increase its cultural and educational programs.

Race and Social Justice Outreach Presentation

Charles Ng, Parks Race and Social Justice Change Team Executive Sponsor, reported on the additional outreach being conducted by the team.

- The Team, assisted by members of the Legacy Citizens Committee, has conducted additional outreach to underrepresented communities
- There have been 16 meetings
- Comments from people they've met with fit into 5 categories:
 1. Cultural Relevancy – what is important, relevant
 2. Access – affordability is an issue
 3. Customer service – are facilities welcoming
 4. Natural environment – cleaner, safer, greener
 5. Capacity building – for race and social justice outreach.
- Thank you to Neighborhood House for help with the additional outreach

- There are a lot of positive race and social justice implications in many of the Investment Initiatives

Jan Jaramillo from Neighborhood House spoke about the collaboration between Parks and NH:

- We have similar goals and face similar barriers to access
- Program cost and cultural relevance are issues; plus, immigrants and refugees don't generally participate in advisory councils
- Women in Action is a program designed to increase participation

Trang Hoang from the High Point Advisory Council also reported on the RSJI outreach

- They have held 4 events and received 137 postcards
- For 70% of respondents, English is their second language
- Affordability, access and accountability are big issues
- Many in the community can only pay less than \$5 per class

Responses to Committee Member Investment Initiative Questions

Acting Deputy Superintendent Eric Friedli and Finance and Administration Division Director Kevin Stoops presented answers to questions previously raised by Committee members.

- 4 new Investment Initiatives have been added, based on requests from the Committee
 - # 34 – Tropical Rainforest and Day-Night Capital Project at the zoo
 - #35 – Urban Food & P-Patch with Department of Neighborhoods
 - #36 – Magnuson Park Master Plan Improvements
 - # 37 -- Get Moving
- Establishing a baseline budget from several years ago is difficult because of the many changes to the budget and to the Parks system that occur over time
- Over the past 13 years, Parks budget has ranged from \$121 to \$133 million per year
- During that time, the system grew from 6,000 acres to 6,300
- Seattle is an expensive City compared to many others, plus it has a unique climate, making it difficult to compare what we spend to other park and recreation systems
- The local expectation is for a high standard of park maintenance and operations

Committee Prioritization of Investment Initiatives

Committee co-chair Barbara Wright explained that the goal for tonight's meeting is to get consensus among Committee members on a prioritized list of Investment Initiatives, beginning with the top 5 Initiatives, Essential Services.

Major Maintenance Committee Member Comments

- What is the difference between the major maintenance funding in Investment Initiative #1 and Initiative #6?

Staff Response: The major maintenance Essential Service Initiative (#1) will provide funding for the top items on Parks prioritized Asset Management Plan. The funding in Initiative #1 will keep the list from growing, but will not reduce the \$267 million backlog. The major maintenance funding in Initiative #6 provides enough funds to eliminate the backlog. The backlog will continue to increase without additional funding; it is a cycle with projects continually being added to the list, and others completed

- Some of the major maintenance projects are really expensive; for example, Building #2 at Magnuson Park which is a \$27 million project – I would not support this being in the funding package
- Please provide the major maintenance needs in priority order
- What are the actual Aquarium needs -- \$14 million or \$5.7 million; and how do we know the actual needs

Staff Response: The Aquarium hired a consultant to evaluate their facilities and determine and prioritize the major maintenance projects; the need is \$1.2 million per year

- The asset management needs are critical because Parks is a huge system

Public/Private Partnership Comments

- Keep to the intent of the Parks Legacy Plan – leverage partnerships and be creative; an example is the Local Improvement District (LID) proposed for the Central Waterfront; make the dollars go as far as possible
- Build leveraging accountability into the funding measure ordinance
- Public/private partnerships will fund some of the needed redevelopment; Magnuson Park is an example
- Parks has capacity issues; partners could provide some features, such as a sound stage in a park;
- Public/private partnerships are great, but there needs to be flexibility on both the donor and Parks side; cities need to be able to let go of ownership to encourage private investment in parks; this is hard to do in Seattle
- Regarding partnership initiatives, the public interest needs to be protected; the public needs to be reassured that projects will be done thoughtfully
- Everything can't become a public/private partnership; it is hard to find funds in communities, and not all communities have equal ability to raise funds; we need to be realistic what partnerships can fund

Basic Services/Supplanting Comments

- Community center operations, regular park maintenance and software investments (CLASS system) should be paid for through the General Fund; more community center hours and more maintenance are needed, but they should not be in a new levy
- Will having basic services in the levy, such as community center operations and park maintenance, give future mayors and city councils the sense that they can cannibalize Parks General Fund budget? This happened at King County.

- The Library levy, Bridging the Gap and the Pro Parks Levy had the same issue; because of the way cities are forced to budget (can't increase taxes over 1% per year) we are forced to do regular city business by ballot measures because there is not enough in the General Fund
- Safeguards can be added to funding measure ordinances to restrict supplanting
- Are there any criteria for what should be funded by the General Fund and what goes to a new funding measure? How did staff determine what is an enhancement?

Staff Response: Parks did not move entire programs to be funded by a ballot measure; if the decision is a short term mechanism, then if a project is solely funded by the ballot measure, it would go away at the end of the term; Parks did not want to jeopardize the "something for everyone" philosophy, so funded program enhancements, rather than entire programs

- Seattle is very pro parks, as shown by the strong support for the King County parks levy;
- As the overall city budget improves and is reforecast, could some items move from a ballot measure to the General Fund?
- I have a problem with including programming in a ballot measure; previous polling didn't favor programming; the city Council should fully fund programming
- Consider what other ballot measures are coming down the pike; for example the pre-kindergarten proposal
- Regular, everyday maintenance should not be in a ballot measure
- Items that give Parks more capacity, such as technology upgrades, that are investments in the long term should be funded by a ballot measure
- Facility maintenance is OK to fund, especially environmentally sustainable facility maintenance, because it has a long term impact
- Human resources infrastructure (Investment Initiative #18) should be funded by the General Fund; it will not be palatable to the public because bureaucrats have no constituency
- We could require the mayor and council to have a General Fund match each year, similar to community matches required for other projects; if there is no match, parks and community centers would have to close – a tough political issue for elected officials; if there is no match from the General Fund, then the ballot measure funds are not provided
- The General Fund does not have enough money to do all that needs to happen
- What makes a legacy? Is maintenance part of legacy? Is sustainable funding for Parks a legacy?
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Investment Initiative Comments

- #14, Develop and Maintain New Parks at 14 Land-banked Sites: the funding amount seems low
Staff Response: We estimate \$750,000 per site, in the ballpark for 2008 Levy projects; but the funding amount for the Investment Initiative, \$1,400,000 is for maintenance only, as the development is projected to come from Central Waterfront funding (#17) in the first three years, before that money is needed on the waterfront

- #13, Expand Natural Area Stewardship to Meet GSP Goals: How does this funding compare to what the Green Seattle Partnership get already? This is an especially good Initiative because of the environmental benefits of urban forests
Staff Response: Current GSP funding is for capital costs, including clearing invasives, planting and establishment of newly cleared areas; #13 provides funding for continuous, long-term care after the initial establishment through a Natural Area Crew and Trail Crew
- #13, Expand Natural Area Stewardship to Meet GSP Goals: Can we leverage other opportunities for funding the Green Seattle Partnership, such as rate payer fees?
- Consider an Initiative that protects access to light and views; these are important for physical and mental well-being
- #8, Major Projects Challenge Fund: I like this idea; could it be used for the major maintenance backlog, for example the Leschi Marina project? Make the community fund half the costs and thereby reduce the public cost
- The public/public partnerships (#'s 27, 30, 32, 33 – partnerships with other City departments) can make the city as a whole better, not just make parks better
- Working with other City agencies leverages their funding, talents and expertise

Additional Public Comment

- **Jake Jaramillo:** Mr. Jaramillo is the co-author of Seattle Stairway Walks. Many stairs go through parks. Trails and trail restoration ranked as having the highest community benefit in the basic services analysis in the Parks Legacy Plan. Also, in the survey done for the Parks Legacy Plan, 53% said they walk or jog either daily or weekly in a park – the highest single use of park property.
- **Becca Aue:** Ms. Aue works for the Seattle Parks Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to improving and expanding the parks system. She spoke in favor of Investment Initiative #31, Neighborhood Park Enhancement with the Seattle Parks Foundation (the Foundation is calling it the “Love Parks Fund”). The fund will allow neighborhoods to use money for small projects such as cleaning up a park or landscape renovation. It brings new resources to the table and will inspire new philanthropy. The Seattle Parks Foundation is committed to bring complementary funds to the Initiative. The fund will allow the Foundation to work more closely and in a deeper relationship with communities.
- **Tom Tanner:** Mr. Tanner represents the Smith Cove Park Coalition, made up of the Magnolia Community Club, Queen Anne Community Council, Uptown Alliance and the Magnolia District Council. Thank you for including Smith Cove Park in the list of Investment Initiatives. The Park will be a world class waterfront park, a cornerstone to the Central Waterfront redevelopment. The park will have good pedestrian and bike access, a p-patch, views, hand launch boat access, shore access and open space. There is growing diversity in the community, more dependent on public spaces for recreation. Also, there is an opportunity to partner with King County Wastewater when the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project is built.

- **Susan Casey:** Ms. Casey is a long—time p-patch user and advocate. Thank you for including Investment Initiative #35, Urban Food and P-Patch with the Department of Neighborhoods. Gardeners are partners in maintenance and operations of p-patches.
- **Michael Oxman:** Mr. Oxman is an arborist. Trees require maintenance. A tree inventory is needed to understand the needs of the urban forest. If trees are cared for when they are young, their life span can be doubled. With a City of 1.5 million trees, more arborists are needed to do both determine the need and do the work: we need to work smarter and earlier. Also, Kubota Gardens needs a drinking fountain and a comfort station.
- **Donna Hartmann-Miller:** The paradigm for levies has changed with the Library and Families and Education levies. If thresholds are met, the money is available. I have problems with the current process – it is too rushed. There are still many questions regarding the baseline budget and what is in the major maintenance plan. An asset management computer system should be funded in the next City budget; we need to get data in order to make decisions about what should be in a ballot measure. Also, incorporate race and social justice information into decision-making.
- **Sarah Welch:** Ms. Welch is an Advisory Council member at the Amy Yee Tennis Center. She is in favor of Investment Initiative #8: Major Projects Opportunity Challenge Fund. The Advisory Council is working to expand the Tennis Center by adding 5 new indoor courts and has been raising money for the projects. They recently added new outdoor courts and want, as an interim project, to cover 6 of the outdoor courts. The facility was built with Forward Thrust funds and is used to the maximum. They have studied use and know that “if we build it they will come.” Tennis Center patrons are kids and seniors and it is a draw for a diverse community. With the Opportunity Fund, a \$2.4 million match would enable construction of an 18-year life cover for 6 outdoor courts. Fees would add \$400,000 to invest in the long-range goal to build new indoor courts in the existing parking lot.
- **Joy Okazaki:** Ms. Okazaki is the President of the Kubota Gardens Foundation. The Garden has had a 24-year partnership with Parks and is supported by the Foundation. The Garden offers tours, volunteer programs and a peaceful, serene, tranquil environment. However, maintenance is under-funded: there are less than 3 full time equivalent staff working in the 20 acre garden, plus the additional 27 acre natural area. Plus there has been no major maintenance funds allocated to Kubota Garden since 2004. The Foundation provided 6,000 volunteer hours in 2012, helping the Garden get rated the #16 attraction in all of Seattle. The Foundation has prioritized a long-range plan that includes an ADA path and redevelopment of the parking lot. Please restore adequate funding for Kubota Gardens’ maintenance.
- **Brock Howell:** Mr. Howell is a member of the Cascade Bicycle Club. The Parks Legacy survey showed parks are used for active use, including walking and biking. We need to increase access to parks. He is in favor of Investment Initiative # 30: Greenways and Safe Walkways with Seattle Department of Transportation. This is a win/win proposal that will create active living by improving the ability to walk or bike to parks. It also is a partnership, and funding could be linked to both the Bicycle and Pedestrian master plans.